



**Interim Charge submission to House Public Health Committee
Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
October 16, 2020**

The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to ensure that Texas youth have access to the information and healthcare resources to prevent teen pregnancy. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback related to the interim charge on the Medicaid 1115 Demonstration Waiver for the Healthy Texas Women program.

We are signatories on and fully support the full interim charge testimony submitted by the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition, of which we are a member organization. In addition to that document, we wish to speak specifically to the importance of our state's reproductive health programs as they relate to adolescent health.

Texas maintains the 9th highest teen pregnancy rate in the nation, with 2.5% of Texas teens giving birth each year, and the highest rate of repeat teen birth¹. To put this in context, a baby is born to a teen mother once every 21 minutes in Texas.

When we talk about teen pregnancy, we often envision high school students, but 72% of teen births in Texas are to young women who are 18 or 19 years old². The vast majority of these pregnancies are unplanned, and 86% of 18- and 19-year old mothers are unmarried. Additionally, nearly one-quarter of births to these older teens are repeat births, meaning they already have at least one child. Many of these trends persist into early adulthood. When we look at young women in the 20-24 age range, 64% of births are to unmarried women and half of those nonmarital births are to women who already have at least one child.

The transition to adulthood often poses a struggle for access to health care, including basic and preventive healthcare. According to American Community Survey data, 30% of Texas young adults aged 19-25 were uninsured in 2019³. Research shows that young Texas women want to be using long-lasting and highly effective forms of contraception, but they perceive cost as a barrier.

Programs such as Healthy Texas Women (HTW), though they do not provide full health care coverage, are a critical safety net for services such as contraception, cervical cancer screening, and well woman care for young adults. For many young women, preventing unintended pregnancy allows them to fulfill goals such as graduating high school, completing college, and gaining a foothold in the workforce.

¹ Texas Campaign Analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Natality public-use data 2007-2018. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/natality-current.html>.

² Ibid

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



We are grateful that the Legislature halted funding cuts in HTW and other programs that would have resulted in reduced client services. **In the coming session, we strongly urge the Legislature preserve maintain, and consider increasing funding in the HHSC D.1.1. budget strategy related to women's health programs, including funding for both HTW and the Family Planning Program.** The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in loss of health coverage for many Texans, including vulnerable young adults, and maintain the capacity of these programs to provide preventive health care is crucial in these times. We also urge members to ensure program stability by maintaining funding for existing contract providers and avoid disruption of existing clinics. Our large-volume family planning providers are able to offer services in a cost efficient manner with well-tuned clinic workflows. Texas's reproductive safety net relies on these experienced providers.

However, as HTW transitions to a Medicaid 1115 Demonstration Waiver program, we are concerned with plans to terminate several administrative policies that made HTW such a success from 2016 – 2019. As noted in the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition written testimony, these concerns include:

- **The loss of automatic enrollment from Pregnant Women's Medicaid into HTW:** Historically, women have automatically been enrolled into HTW as they lose coverage through Pregnant Women's Medicaid. Similarly, adolescent health advocates supported the implementation of automatic enrollment from Children's Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) into HTW. However, as HTW transitions to a Medicaid program, the Health and Human Services Commission has stated that the automatic enrollment process will be replaced with administrative renewal. In concept, administrative eligibility determinations could help Texas women access healthcare as they exit other programs, including aging out of Children's Medicaid and CHIP. However, according to research by the Kaiser Family Foundation, Texas is able to process less than 25% of administrative renewals successfully. In the absence of improvements to the administrative renewal process, this does not represent an appropriate substitute for automatic enrollment.
- **The loss of adjunctive eligibility:** If a woman or her children are enrolled in other programs such as Children's Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, or TAFN, she currently is not required to prove her eligibility for HTW as she has already shown eligibility for other programs with more stringent requirement. We urge HHSC to request a waiver amendment to continue using adjunctive eligibility for HTW.
- **More complex application form:** HHSC has announced plans to require women applying for HTW to complete the Texas Health Coverage Application (Form 1205), a lengthy document that requires information patients are unlikely to have on hand if they are applying on site in a health clinic. The current one-page form is more easily filled out on site. Training for clinical staff will be needed for the more cumbersome form.

Contraceptive Coverage in CHIP

Texas is one of just two states in the nation that does not fund contraception in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for purposes of pregnancy prevention. This leaves the more than 50,000 adolescent females on CHIP without easily accessible access to birth control. Of the teens enrolled in



CHIP in FY 2018, HHSC data show that 1,600 teens in this cohort experienced a pregnancy by FY 19, including 3% of enrolled 17 year old girls and 6% of enrolled 18 year old girls.⁴

The Healthy Texas Women Program does not provide coverage to women with other creditable health insurance. For this reason, older teens who are covered by CHIP are not able to enroll in Healthy Texas Women. These teens do have the option of receiving services through the Family Planning Program; however, this program is persistently underfunded and many counties do not have enrolled clinics.

We urge the legislature to consider policy change allowing reimbursement for contraception in the CHIP program. Alternately, we encourage policy change to allow youth on CHIP to enroll in the HTW program.

⁴ Texas Campaign analysis of HHSC data